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2011 IN REVIEW

RIVALRIES 2011 - NADAL VS. FEDERER

Rivalries

by ATP Staff | 21.12.2011

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Rafael Nadal defeated Roger Federer in three of four meetings this season, including a semi-final clash in Miami.

ATPWorldTour.com reviews how the key rivalries played out in 2011. Today we feature Rafael Nadal vs. Roger Federer.

It is one of the most storied rivalries in tennis history, as fans around the world follow intently when Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer battle it out on court. Nadal continued to extend his advantage in his FedEx ATP Head 2 Head series with Federer, winning three of four meetings against his Swiss opponent during the 2011 season to move ahead 17-9. But Federer had the final say at the end of the year, sending a message that he will be a fierce competitor in 2012.

Their first clash was a highly anticipated semi-final encounter at the Sony Ericsson Open, where the two were meeting for the first time in six years on North American soil. However, the Star-Spangled blockbuster did not quite live up to its billing, as Nadal compiled an all-around performance to dismiss Federer 6-3, 6-2, advancing to his third Miami final.

“In general, I think I played a very, very good match, very solid and serious,” said Nadal. "I was playing very good from the baseline, without mistakes with my forehand, playing aggressive, so it wasn't an easy situation [for him] when [he was] back all the time in the score.”

Nadal was victorious again when the two squared off in the semi-finals of the Mutua Madrid Open, rallying from a set down to win 5-7, 6-1, 6-3 and claim his 37th straight win on clay.

“I thought Rafa played well and me too at times so it was a good match," Federer said. "It was it a good first set and even the second set at 6-1 doesn’t tell the truth and the third as well. I felt it was very close. Maybe the result doesn’t show as much but I thought I was right here.”

The dynamic duo met for the third time, four weeks later, in the Roland Garros final - though their match-up was somewhat unexpected. Riding a wave of strong form, Federer knocked out then Novak Djokovic - who, at the time, was undefeated in 41 matches in 2011 - in the semi-finals. The 16-time major champion showed his hunger to lift another Grand Slam trophy, opening with a 5-2 lead in the first set and holding a set point against the "King Of Clay". But Nadal clawed his way back, winning five games in a row to deny Federer the set. While the 2009 champion had his opportunities throughout the match, Nadal closed him out 7-5, 7-6(3), 5-7, 6-1 in three hours and 40 minutes to win his record-tying sixth crown at the event.

“For me it's something very special to equal the six titles of Bjorn Borg, for sure,” said Nadal. “But the most important thing is to win Roland Garros. It's really an honour to have this record with him. I am going to keep working to be here next year and to try to play well another time.”

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Nadal and Federer did not face off again until the end of the season at the Barclays ATP World Tour Finals. Playing his best tennis of the year, Federer sent shockwaves across the O2 Arena, dominating the round-robin meeting with a convincing 6-3, 6-0 victory over the second-ranked Nadal in 60 minutes of play. Federer cracked 28 winners to Nadal's four, and notched his first win against the Mallorcan since defeating him in the 2010 London final.

"It was a great match for me basically from start to finish," stated Federer. "I was able to do what I was hoping to do: dominate from the baseline, play close to the baseline, serve well, take his time away... For me it was an exciting match to play."

The 30 year old went on to win his record-breaking sixth year-end championship, finishing 2011 with a 17-match win streak and World No. 3 ranking.

Nadal vs. Federer: 2011 Meetings

Tournament	Winner	Score
Miami SF	Nadal	63 62
Madrid SF	Nadal	57 61 63
Roland Garros F	Nadal	75 76(3) 57 61
Barclays ATP World Tour Finals RR	Federer	63 60

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